

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1871.

Subject: The Power of Humble Fidelity.

# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



New-York:

J. B. FORD & CO., No. 39 PARK ROW.

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1871.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.

European Agents, SAMPSON LOW, SON, & MARSTON, Crown Buildings, 188 Fleet Street, London.

Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers.

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## THE POWER OF HUMBLE FIDELITY.

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"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples and saith unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."—Mark xii.41-44.

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We are to make much allowance for those rapturous expressions that we find even in the Old Testament, respecting the beauty of Jerusalem.

"Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, the city of our God."

I should have esteemed this old people less, if they had not thought that their home and their city were more beautiful than any other in the world. Do we not do the same thing? Do we not indulge in gentle exaggerations as respects the flavor of the water of our father's well? None other in the world was like it, to our thinking. And the apples that grew in the orchard—how excellent they were! Nowhere shall we find again such apples of paradise as we ate in our youth. And the very brook, and the overhanging trees—yea, the brown old house, from which the red has almost been beaten by rains and winds—where shall we find anything, on the whole, more charming to our eyes? For it is love that is the artist, and carves, and throws a strange beauty over everything that the heart adopts. And so the homely old cradle, and the grotesque pump, and the queer furnishing of the house, and the ordinary tree, and the common well of common water—these things are all magnified and glorified in the affections of our childhood.

We do not wonder, therefore, that the Jews thought there never was another such city as Jerusalem—and in some respects there never was. But they thought it was wonderful in beauty. It was very far from it. Probably there is but one way in which we can come upon that city, and have it seem very comely, and produce any impression, although our imagination is charmed with associations of

every description, and comes, not only with a painter's zeal, but with the enthusiasm of the historian and the devotee, to find everything there that is stately and beautiful. It is very common-place except as you go in from the East. From that side it is striking. Looked upon from the hills, upon the far side of which Bethany stands—looked upon from the valley of the Kedron, Jerusalem is still very striking and impressive.

It was upon that very side that the temple stood. And when we speak of the temple, you must dismiss from your mind all conception of some Grecian temple, or of some Gothic cathedral, or of any other building such as you see in modern times. For the temple was not so much a building as a complex citadel. It was a system of courts, open mostly to the heaven, and surrounded by massive walls, magnificent in the size of the stones, and in their beauty. Rising and covering over the summit of one part of the hill, court within court, the temple system stood. The Temple proper was quite a small building, comparatively speaking, upon the very top level, while graded all the way down from it were these successive, and for the most part open courts, surrounded by walls made gorgeous by whatever treasure could confer. And when the Jews drew near from the East to their favorite haunt or place of worship, it presented, in the blaze of the sun a magnificent shining spectacle.

It was in this temple that the most of Christ's instruction was given which took place in Jerusalem. It was not according to a custom of the nation, nor according to climatic conditions, that instruction should take place in the streets; and still less, that it should take place in buildings, of which there were none large enough to hold the masses of persons who were perpetually following the footsteps of our Master.

The outer court of the temple was called "The Court of the Gentiles," because the Gentiles were permitted to go up into it (they were permitted to go no further under pain of death). On the south side of the base of the quadrangle was Herod's porch—a very magnificent covered way. It is supposed that in that porch, which was open on the temple side, though it was closed on the side looking to the south, Christ principally taught his disciples. For synagogues were held there; and there were schools there—peripatetic schools; and throngs of men resorted thither, as with us they resort on market-days to the Exchange. There were all sorts of Exchanges there. And there it was, as I said, that Christ mostly taught.

But as you ascended, step by step, some fifteen feet, you came into a second series of courts. And in one of these was placed the treasury. It seems that on one occasion the Master was sitting

there with the disciples, or near them; watching what took place. And what did take place?

There were Jews passing, an endless procession of them, and depositing in the chest or chests that were set there their annual gifts or offerings. For the support of the temple-service these gifts were made. Not alone from the inhabitants of the land, but from the world—the then civilized world—flowed gifts; and probably more came from outside the bounds of Palestine than from within them. For, at this time the Jews had been brought so much under the dominion of the Greeks, that they had become commercialized. And having been driven hither and thither by the conflicts of revolution, they had been, as it were, drained out of the land: so that there was no conspicuous city on the globe where commerce held its marts, that the Jews were not beginning to be known in it.

Thus Christ saw, undoubtedly, Jews coming from every city in Asia where they had trafficked, bringing their wealth back to their native land, and to their beautiful temple. He saw men from Alexandria, and Cairo, and all the other Egyptian cities; He saw men from Greece, and Rome, and from the furthermost parts of Italy, coming with annual, or biennial, or more or less frequent gifts in their hands. And there were among them many who had magnificent wealth; many who were princely in their possessions. And they were accompanied by trains which corresponded with their wealth. They had with them retinues of servants to bring their offerings. One and another and another stepped forward. And there were the admiring spectators. This was of Asia; and this was of Babylon; and this was of Ephesus, and this was of Greece or Rome.

So, one by one they came. It was a great day of gifts. One train after another swept by, and these gifts were deposited in the resounding chest—bars of gold, bullion, great masses of the precious metal—often requiring the chest to be taken away and changed.

While this was going on, there came, like a very, very small punctuation point, a poor creature, hesitating between the grandes, with worn sandals, and with garments tattered, and with her head bowed. Standing meekly aside and watching her opportunity, she at last slipped in her offering. So small was it, that you might have listened and you could not have heard it chink. It is said to have been “two mites.” Upon computation it may be found that a mite was one-twentieth part of a penny, so that her two mites amounted to one-tenth of a penny. Therefore it was almost like dust in her hand; and I am not exaggerating when I say that you could not have heard it fall into the chest—especially after the ringing of the plump bullion of some big Jew.

She dropped in her offering, and quickly drew aside and went away, and did not know that anybody saw her, as probably nobody did among the Jews ; and did not know that any one cared for her, as in all that throng probably none did, save One ; and certainly did not know that after two thousand years, her name being lost, her deed of heroism would be the theme of instruction and of inspiration to you and to me to-day, as it has been to tens of thousands of Christians since then. This poor, meanly clad, solitary widow threw in her tenth part of a penny and retired. And the narrative goes on,

“ He called unto him his disciples.”

They, however, had not seen the act ; or they were but just within glancing distance. He beckoned to them and pointed out what was done. And he said unto them,

“ Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury.”

And then he gave his reasons :

“ For they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

It would seem, then, that she had had that day no food ; that she had denied herself. She had thrown in all she had with which to buy sustenance. And Christ, who knew all things, and needed not that any should tell him anything, saw this in all its beauty and simplicity and moral significance. He could not lose such a text as that. And, calling his disciples to him, he instructed them in one of the most important moral truths that can be presented to the mind of man.

This action on her part was an action of great disinterestedness ; for she knew perfectly well that if she gave nothing none would miss it. She knew perfectly well that if she gave something none would notice it. She knew perfectly well that the little which she could give would be of no importance, in itself, to the treasury or to the temple. Besides, it was all that she had to subsist on that day ; and as she gave that, it must have been to meet a want in her own soul, of generosity. She could not endure to have the service of the temple go on, and she bear no part in it. Though what she could give was very little indeed, that she must be permitted to give, for the sake of her own feelings rather than on account of its value.

It was not literally true that she gave more than all of them ; but she gave more compared to what she had to give. Nor was her gift equal to theirs when its direct uses were considered. Their gifts were not to be despised. There was a good reason why gifts should be made, and unquestionably a thousand pounds would be more in maintaining the service of the sanctuary than the mites of the poor widow. But Christ was not measuring value in that direction. He

was making the action the test of disposition. It was not what the power of money was ; it was not what it could do upon the world ; it was the disposition which went with the money, that Christ was measuring. He was measuring its force, its magnitude. He was measuring, therefore, by the principle of generosity. And the smallest gift of that day, measured thus, was larger than the greatest gift.

For, do you suppose, that among all those who bestowed their gifts at that time, before her, and after her, there was a single other one who gave from so pure a motive, from so deep a love, and at such sacrifice ? There were gifts, many of them of vanity, many of them of pride, many of them of superstition, many of them of mere custom and necessity ; but hers was a voluntary gift of love. And that fact consecrated it. Love imparts a value to a gift which nothing but love can stamp upon it.

1. This is a striking illustration of our Lord's sympathy for the heart of human life instead of for its exterior. He was sitting in the very culmination of the pride and beauty of the Jewish ceremonial. He was surrounded by the garmented priests. There were the learned men of his time. There was the sovereign authority of his nation. Around about him were men from every clime. There was great stir, great interest, great excitement among them. He looked upon all these things and what he thought is not recorded ; but we may well conclude, when this was the one feature of the whole scene, which he fixed his eye upon and dwelt upon, that he was not attracted by the sumptuous trains of these gorgeous gift-bringers. He did not look upon all the unworldliness of these religionists with interest. He saw among them that which interpreted the innermost and the best nature. That which was highest, that which was true, that which was piteous, that which was humane, that which was gentle, that which was generous—this was what he saw. And all the more if no one else was likely to see it. It was the disposition of Christ, not as man, but as God, to bring himself into sympathy with that side of human life which is the most piteous and the most necessitous. Where human life needs the most sympathy, and where usually it is the most barren—there is where Christ is more likely to be found than anywhere else.

Interpreting this trait which we behold in his earthly life into divinity, or into the other life, it becomes a trait of transcendent importance; and we begin to understand something of that divine feeling. For now, in heaven, as then upon earth, only in larger circles, and with grander developments, the same disposition is in Christ to be in sympathy with things that are lowly and needy, things that are helpless, and things that are piteous. Where human strength

usually disdains to notice—there is the very point at which divine strength notices most. Where men see least to be admired, under uncouth forms of helplessness; and where there is a want of productive power, and an absence of positive force of any kind; where being seems ground down to its lowest estate—there, men look with scarcely veiled contempt, and esteem things to be vulgar: but there is where Christ looks with sympathy and compassion.

And we have the revelation of the same truth in the Gospel of Isaiah, from which it was borrowed—for the prophecy of Isaiah may as well be called *the first Gospel*—where Christ declares that he dwells with the humble and contrite and broken in heart.

This revelation, which was made in the early days, and which was confirmed by the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, put upon the whole Divine government a new aspect to us, of great comfort and encouragement. For, while we see things in this world going to the strong hand; while philosophy takes care of the thinker; while fame takes care of the successful; while mammon takes care of the skilled and fortunate; while in all the thoroughfares of life the strong crowd the weak to the wall, and have compassion in the great battle of life only on those that are able to stand, and tread down those that are humbler and weaker, it is well to know that there is a revelation which nature does not make—a revelation of the heart of God, and of a disposition in which there is thought, feeling, desire, sympathy, for those who are too weak to take care of themselves; too feeble to report themselves by anything that they can do among their fellow-men. If human life takes care of the successful, the Divine government takes care of the unsuccessful. If men crown the eminent, God crowns the lowly. If men look after and serve those that are conspicuous, God searches out and thinks of those that are inconspicuous and humble. The great Eye is not looking out for great deeds alone—though they are recognized. God is not thinking of the men who are thinking most of themselves, nor of those of whom men are thinking most. God's disposition and government take in the great under-class of men. The myriads are noted and registered whose deeds are done in secret in this world. The sorrows of those for whom no men sorrow; and the tears of those that weep in secret places; and the yearnings of those that have no answer to their desires; and the prayers of the distressed that seem to die in the air, rising in simple petitions or on the wings of song; and the experiences of those that seem to be swept hither and thither by the current of fortune and of life, as the dust is swept by the whirlwind on the summer road—it is good to know that the eye of God

ever looks upon these things. It is good to know that somebody takes care of the neglected ; that somebody thinks of those that are unthought of ; that somebody, whose nature is all-powerful, and who is all-glorious, will, by and by, speedily come to judgment and reward his own whom the whole world despise.

2. Many of the secret fidelities of life have power to outlive, in usefulness, the products of ambitious desires and deeds. All the rich gifts of the temple are now forgotten. We do not know what princes were there. We do not know what rabbi was syllabled with admiration among his fellows, on that day. We do not know what eminent man of wealth that had traveled from afar, was pointed out—yea was courted and caressed—on account of his munificence. The only person who has come down to us is the one who was the least conspicuous, and the least known. The gentle light of that example shines still. Ten thousand there were of greater mark ; but only she lives. And all the ages have not buried her. All illustrious history has not set aside that simple unconscious act. All the events of revolutions and upturnings that have happened since, have made no change in her renown. There is the temple ; there is the gorgeous procession ; there is the poor shuffling widow ; there is the quiet Christ, over against her ; there is the pleased eye ; there is the benign lip ; there are those words of regard and sympathy ; and they will sound like strains of music which cannot be lost out of life.

How little she thought what she was doing ! How little she thought how much she was enriching the world ! Two mites—one tenth of a penny—she threw into the chest ; and she has made the world richer than all the tributes which were paid that year in Jerusalem, by her unconscious humility, and by her simple generosity and benevolence.

It is still the same. We think those gifts most influential which have most of record ; but it is not so. I believe that the God who made this case so eminent, I believe that that ascended Christ who so emphasized this little history that it has been fruit-bearing for thousands of years, still administers in the same way. And while he does not repudiate, while he does not reject the services that are more conspicuous, and that have their echo and their report, I believe that those things which will be most blest of God, as will be seen at the revelation of the last day, will be the things which have been quite unknown in this world. When the buried things shall be brought forth ; when the silent thoughts shall have some exposition ; when the motives, and the impulses, and the deep feelings, and the actions to which they lead, shall be all made known in the great

revealing day of the future ; when people in the other life shall be in their aspect what their deeds and their dispositions make them to be in this life, then it will be found that those who are last here will be first there, and that those who are first here will be last there. While many a proud philanthropist whose name is carved and gilded over and over and over again will scarcely be seen, many strange philanthropists will emerge from among the poor and needy, and take their places as princes, eminent in the forefront of God's glory.

So God himself works. So gives he a pattern for us to work after. It is not the thunder which makes the most racket that does the most work. The things in this world that are accomplishing great deeds are silent things, and hidden things. And we are told, in a kind of strange paradox, that *the things which are not, are ordained to bring to nought the things that are*. The most inconspicuous things often belong to God's most potential working.

The root neither strives nor cries ; and yet, all the engines of all the ships and shops on earth, that puff and creak with ponderous working, are not to be compared for actual power with the roots of one single acre of ground in the meadow. All the vast pumps of Harlem Lake, and all that serve our needs, adjoining, are not to be compared for force with that might which inheres in one single tree. It is a fact revealed only to those who study natural history, that leaves, that vegetation, that dews, and rains, and heat, that the natural attractions which prevail in the world, without any echo or outward report, have an enormous power in them, and that they are the means by which God works. He works in silence, and inconspicuously, and almost hiddenly.

And so they work importantly who work by thought, by love, by zeal, by faith unrevealed ; who work in places not seen by the public eye, in season and out of season, from the mere desire to do good, and not from the mere love of being found out in doing it.

Look upon your scarfs, so brilliant. The color shines afar off. Comely it is in the vat of the dyer. Comely it is on the shoulder of beauty. How exquisite is the dye that comes from the cochineal insect. And yet, how small is that insect—scarcely, I may say, so big as the point of a pin—which feeds so inconspicuously on the under-side of the leaf of the cactus, nourishing his growth quite unconscious that as one of all the myriads of all these little shining points will he by and by help to produce those glowing colors which civilization and refinement will make so meet and comely in distant lands ! So it is with good deeds. The great things in this world are the sum of infinitesimal little things. And those who are in sympathy with God and nature, are not to reject in men the ripening, the develop-

ment of themselves or their true spiritual life, because the effect is but little. That effect will be joined to other things which are like itself obscure, and others and others will make their contributions ; and little by little the sum of these specks of gold will make masses of gold ; little by little these small insects will make great quantities of coloring matter ; little by little small things will become large in magnitude.

Do not be ashamed, then, to live in humility, if you fill it up with fidelity. Never measure the things that you do, or do not, by the report which they can make. Do well that which you do ; do that which is right, and just, and good ; and do not stand with your eye on those that watch you. Do the things which shall fill your heart with a sense of fidelity, of generosity, and of obedience to God ; and then let God take care of the result. It will report itself by and by. The widow went away, after depositing her gift in the treasury ; and I do not suppose that she knew until she got to Heaven that Christ ever thought of her. So it may be with you.

3. There are two spheres in which men must work. The first is that which judges of causes by their apparent relations to the end sought. That is important ; but it is not the only sphere. It is the visible material sphere—the one which belongs to the region of physical cause and effect. We are obliged to work in that sphere according to its own laws.

But in the moral sphere men must judge of acts by their relations to the motives and dispositions which inspire them ; and they are great or little, not according to what they do, but according to the sources from which their actions spring.

In engineering, that only is great which *does*. It matters not what the intention is, he who in the day of battle is not victorious, is not saved by his intention. No matter how wisely you mean, if your timber is not squared and fitted right, the result is not right. In the outward sphere effect measures the worth of the plan. In that sphere effect must always be measured by the cause ; and the worth of the cause must be proved by the effect. And that is the lower sphere.

In the moral sphere it is the other way. There, no matter what the effect is, you do not measure in that direction. Pray. Your prayer accomplishes nothing ? The measure is not “What did it do ?” Speak. Your words fall apparently uncaught and unprofitable ? You do not measure in that direction. You measure the other way. What was it in your *heart* to do ? What was your purpose ? In the moral sphere we look at the bow—not at the target. From what motive did the soul project its purpose ?

What gave that sigh? What issued that speech? What created that silence? What produced that moral condition? In that sphere the *heart* measures, estimates, registers.

This gives rise to thoughts which perhaps may have relation to ourselves.

There are many who will work if you will show them that their working will insure immediate good results. They will work in the moral sphere if they can work according to the genius of the visible or the physical sphere. They will work if they can do what others do. They do not work because they love to work. They do not work because they feel that it is their duty to work, simply, without regard to consequences. They are willing to work under the stimulus of a vain ambition. They will work if they may be praised. They will work if they are to receive an equivalent for their working in some appreciable form. The equivalent, oftentimes, for exertion, is praise or popularity. And thus men enter into the kingdom of God working for their own selves while they take to themselves the credit of working for God.

Disinterested labor—how little there is of it! How few there are outside of the household that work for others to gratify an intrinsic desire to do good! How few there are that work as Christ does, who works because he loves, and because he must do the will of his Father which is in heaven, which is his meat and drink! How few are there working in life who put forth exertion, not for the sake of what is right, but because their hearts are in sympathy with God's heart and because they desire to work! How few there are that work in order to give expression to their moral nature!

Do, then, whatever there is to be done without questioning and without calculation. Make progress in things moral. If need be, utter stammering words. Would you console the troubled if you only had a ready tongue? Take the tongue that you have. Ring the bell that hangs in your steeple, if you can do no better. Do as well as you can. That is all that God requires of you. Would you pray with the needy and tempted if you had eminent gifts of prayer? Use the gifts that you have. Do not measure yourself according to the pattern of somebody else. Do not say to yourself, "If I had his skill," or, "If I had his experience." Take your own skill and your own experience, and make the most of them. Do you stand over against trouble and suffering, and marvel that men whom God hath blessed with such means do so little? Do you say to yourself, "If I had money, I know what I would do with it"? No, you do not. God does; and so he does not trust you with it. "If I had something different from what I have, I would

work," says many a man. No; if you would work in other circumstances, you would work just where you are. A man that will not work just where he is, with just what he has, and for the love of God, and for the love of man, will not work anywhere, in such a way as to make his work valuable. It will be adulterated work. What if you have not money? If you have a heart to work, it is better than if you had great riches. Men need sympathy and brotherhood as much as they need the loaf. It may be that you cannot teach as you would; nevertheless, you can teach. And if you are only willing to do the least things now, by and by you may do better. But whether you do better or not, it is your business to do that which it is in your power to do. You are to do what you can, whether it be more or less; whether it be great or little; whether it be conspicuous or inconspicuous and humble. And if you find that you are hesitant, reluctant, and are acting accordingly, be sure that you do not belong to the widow's school. Did she say to herself, as she handled her fractions of a penny, "What is the use of my throwing these in? They will scarcely be taken out. They are all that I have, with which to buy my day's food. There it will do very little good; here it will do a great deal of good. It is my duty to take care of myself. I am bound to feed my body"? Nothing of the sort. But ah! what a heart she had! She would rather serve her heart, and go that day without necessary food, that she might feel, "I too stand among my people, and I help to support this temple, and I praise my God by my benefaction." The privilege of throwing into the treasury the tenth part of a penny made music in her heart, if it made music nowhere else. And God heard it, and accepted it, and blessed it to all eternity.

Do not then go about saying, "Where shall I bestow my talents? Where shall I settle myself?" I have seen teachers and preachers whose distress of mind seemed to be that they were endowed with a royalty of talents which made it very difficult for them to know where to go. They were like big men-of-war that do not dare to go into shallow channels for fear of running aground. I have known men who spent the best part of their lives in looking about to see where they might bestow themselves with their magnificent talents. And, on the other hand, I have known little uncomely men like Paul—who was probably one of the most insignificant blear-eyed looking men of his generation—who never thought about where they should bestow themselves, who took no great account of their talents, but who had warm hearts which interpreted their worth, and who were morning and evening by the road-side, or in the car, or in the cottage of the poor, or in the resplendent mansion of the rich man,

and who wherever they were, were opening the fountain of true and divine benevolence. They were continually doing the thing next to them that needed to be done, and they had no time for anxiety as to where they should bestow themselves. They were benefactors, and they devoted themselves to doing good.

Do not be too ambitious. Be more zealous than ambitious. Do not calculate; though you should have discrimination and good sense. (Still, that is a thing which God gives to men; and if he does not give it to them they never can get it.) Work, not so much by the engineer's rule, or the arithmetician's calculations, as by the impulses of a heart that would praise God everywhere. And so your life shall not be void or empty. You cannot make a heart empty and profitless that is full of throbbing sympathy. There are men who scatter good wherever they are. Some of it is recognized, and some of it is not; but they go on scattering it just as much as though it were all recognized.

I do not think that flowers know how much the dews bless them; but the dews do bless them immeasurably. In heaven you will find out how much good you have accomplished—and I pity the man who can estimate in this life all the good he has done. He must be living a starveling, poverty-stricken life. But blessed is the man the result of whose good deeds will be disclosed to him in the other life in greater measure than in this!

If men are working by unconscious ways; if the shadow of one passing-by is sufficient to cure the sick; if the touch of garments carries healing in it; if the effects produced by a heart overflowing with love are such as I have described, how many men will by and by rise up into stature! And how many, alas! will sink down out of stature!

God's work, which is growing, building up, in the world, is not done mostly by those who are most in men's mouths or eyes. Without undervaluing the more obvious institutions—schools and churches; without undervaluing books and ordinances; while I esteem as highly as any man can these outward instrumentalities, I more highly esteem those silent, invisible influences which are at work among men for their amelioration and elevation. I do not think I do a thousandth part as much good here by my ministrations as is done by the obscure fidelities of the poor people who go to their houses and live the religion which I only preach. Ah! it is the unobtrusive piety, it is the quiet painstaking, it is the suffering for another amidst poverty and amidst discouragements, it is the unimpeached fidelity which, though spit upon, and beaten, and neglected, and abused, still carries love in the midst of vice and squalor—it is these things that

the Christ made manifest in this world—the Christs of poor men ; the Christ of suffering and bleeding hearts ; the Christs of self-denial. For the cross is not abolished. Thousands yet go bearing the cross, following Christ. And while I would not undervalue the outward presentations of truth ; while I would not diminish the churches that exist, I would exalt these more silent and obscure virtues, and say, "After all, there is the marrow ; there is the power of God in this world." It resides in the almost hidden examples of true Christian living. There is many a tear that plashes on the floor which outdoes in power the rounded sentences of the most resplendent orator. There is many a simple act of standing still and waiting on God which is more potent than the stateliest thing which is done by the hand of art. The history of this world is not to be written on marble, or wood, or stone, or gold. The history of this world is going on in the heart in obscurity. The meekness, the patience, the gentleness, the forbearance, the sweet forgiveness, the spirit which says, "Try again!" the undisclosed endeavor—these things, continued for days and weeks and months and years, through good report and through bad report ; the following after Christ in one's self, in one's fellows, in the poor and unfortunate, in those that have no parents, in those that are tempted by poverty where the very crust is divided—these are the things by which great histories are being written. Ah ! God dips the pen of the recording angel very near to the mud-puddle. God selects the white linen of many a saint very near to rags. God selects the gold out of which he will build the pavement of the hereafter very near to the filth and the dirt of this world. Our open life will take care of itself. In our obscure, secret life —there is where we need more faith ; more fidelity ; more of the true Christian fruit.

There is in this view a very searching criticism for every one to apply to himself, in respect to the increase of his usefulness for Christ.

Judging this woman by moral proportions, *she did what she could*. It is said, in another place, of her that broke the alabaster box on Christ's head, "She hath wrought a good work." Here it is said, "She hath given all her living." And this woman who gave a fraction of a penny, gave more, according to the doctrine of moral proportions, than they who gave gold and precious stones.

Now, how many who, as they begin life, in their youth, are generous, and give according to their means, as they grow stronger, and acquire more property, and become more learned, become less generous ! How many, as they become more skillful and refined, grow more fastidious ! How many, as they become more capable of throw-

ing light on persons, shield that light for their own enlightenment in their own dwelling ! How many, as they become more endowed, so that they might become benefactors to those below them, gather about themselves their sweet companions, and go in chanting robes to sing charming music for themselves ! When they were poor they were generous, but as their means increased, no proportion was kept between what they received and what they gave. If at the beginning they would give one-tenth of their regular income, at the end they would not give a thousandth part of that income. Men, as they grow strong, and rich, and learned, and refined, seldom keep up that proportion between what they do and what they can do with which they started in life. It is a sad and sorrowful fact which statistics will bear out, that when we begin Christian life, and are learners, we come more nearly to working in proportion to what we have than when we have completed the circle of our education, and come to the other side. Few men at the last part of life work at all nearly up to the measure of what they have. And so it is that we see the spectacle of men who step aside and let others come in, just at that period when they themselves are best fitted to lift, as Samson lifted ; when they are best fitted to contend, as the noblest warriors contend, against the evils of life; when they are the best fitted to rear the most magnificent moral structures; when they are the most fully equipped with experiences, and the most completely endowed with materials for working.

But, not to draw this thought unduly out, I remark that there is great cheer in the incident which is the theme of our discourse this morning, to those who are under circumstances of great discouragement and despondency. I love to bring up such examples from the history of our Master, to encourage those who need encouragement. For we grow weary in well-doing, forgetting that "*in due season we shall reap if we faint not.*" There are those who are surrounded by household cares, who are subject to more or less discouragement, who do not know from day to day which way they shall turn. To all such I would say, Be faithful still, whether in sickness or in trouble ; bear the yoke ; endure hardness in your places as good soldiers. What if you are not known ? What if you have not friends ? What if you are obscure ? What if you have no altar at which to worship ? Then worship where you are. Stand where God has put you. Bear, endure, fulfill. No matter if there is no window through which men can look into your life. There is One that sees you. God's eye is on you at morning, and at evening, and through the whole day. The Saviour is present with every father and every mother who are seek-

ing to do their appropriate work faithfully in the household. So be of good cheer.

Do not care what the world says, if Christ praises you. In all kinds of business there are men who are seeking to do their Master's will, finding themselves bruised, their best moral efforts overthrown, and themselves, oftentimes, unsuccessful. They counsel with themselves as to whether they shall still bear witness to integrity ; whether they shall not go with the rushing throng and accept custom. But the Saviour says to every man who is seeking to have the spirit of Christ in him, "Carry that Spirit into your affairs. I behold. Endure to the end. I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God, if you hold out to the last."

Do not be discouraged, then. Do not yield the conflict. Stand steadfastly in your place. Still ask for the brightest inspirations. Still attempt to pour from your soul into the affairs and channels where you are, God's truest thoughts and feelings ; and the time will come when God will reward you.

And to those who are in schools, and are discouraged with the infatigue and stupidity and ignorance of scholars ; to those teachers who labor with small compensation ; to the great army of noble souls who have gone away from the comforts of home, and set themselves down in the twilight of far distant States to carry knowledge to those to whom it was until recently a crime ; to those who find themselves shut out from respectability, and from sympathy, and who are obliged to herd with the poor, and make their bed with them—to all such I would say, Be of good cheer. The God of the widow and of the orphan, the God of the poor and the needy, the God of final and quick-coming judgment—he beholds you, and is interested in you, and will multiply to you ten thousand fold for every sorrow or joy in over-measure. "In patience possess ye your souls"; do in obscurity the thing that is true, and right, and noble; and wait for God.

And to all those who are preaching in discouragement in the midst of superstitions, and in rude neighborhoods are seeking to build foundations whose superstructure they never expect to see—to them I would say, Dear friends of Christ, be ye not discouraged. "In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." The time is short. The work is great. God needs just such men as are willing to work without witness, and without earthly reward. Speak with a homely tongue, if God has given you no better. Speak from house to house, if it be not yours to stand on the platform and command an audience. If you cannot do the things which you do as you fain would do them, and as others expect you to do them, do them as best you can ; and remember that it is the heart that measures the deed, and gives it its

value. And the time is not far distant when the God of the poor widow will call you from your labor, and own you in the presence of his angels. Then you will be measured, not by the eloquent tongue, not by the ready hand, not by the skillful finger, but by the love, the fidelity, and earnest sincerity, which there was in your soul, which inspired your labor, and which kept you faithful to the very end.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We draw near to thee, O Lord our God! instructed in thy love through Jesus Christ our Saviour. We rejoice that thou dost not meet us with force, nor with penalty; that thou dost not measure with justice and with equity; for none of us could stand in thy presence. There is no part of our nature with which we have not sinned. There is no part of the law that hath touched us that we have not broken. We have sinned for years, hardening our hearts until they are perverse and turned out of the way. And we rejoice that thou hast recreated in us newness of life, through Jesus our Lord, and taught us to come to thee reverently, in the spirit of filial fear, but more in the spirit of confidence and love. We rejoice that thou hast unveiled thyself to us as nature does not. We behold thee and thy laws full of good fruit to the obedient, and full of penalty to the transgressor. And where in all the realm without dost thou declare thyself to be with the penitent, and with the lowly, and with the weak, and with the needy, and with the guilty? Verily thou hast spoken to us by the voice of thy Son—by our Saviour. Thou hast taught us that thou art dealing with us even as parents deal with their children; that thou dost not spare thyself, didst not spare thyself, wilt not spare thyself; that thou dost give time, and thought, and care, and suffering itself, that thou mayest bring forth unto purity those that are gone astray. Thou art seeking the dark, to give them light. Thou art calling, with all the voice of thy providence, to those who are pursuing evil ways, to turn again upon their path, and to come unto thee. Thou art helping them. Words of warning thou dost throw down before them, and words of encouragement behind them, that they may be drawn from the evil that threatens them, and brought back to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

Now, O Lord our God! we desire to come to thee in the blessed name of Christ Jesus. We desire to come with all the encouragement, with all the hope, and with all the assurance which is in him. May his promises cover us. May all the sweet words of cheer which have sustained so many thousands in the deepest of the battle of life, sustain us. May those truths, which have been the armor of God to so many, clothe us. Grant that we, as good soldiers in this great warfare, clothed with the whole panoply of God, may stand, and having done all, still stand. Grant, we beseech of thee, that we may, this day, draw very near to thee in hope, very near in love, very near in the spirit of appropriating faith. May we be able to take something from thy truth home to ourselves. May we be able this day to feel that God hath entered into the secret experience of our souls; that he hath shined blessings upon us; that the altar hath given something to the soul.

And grant, we pray thee, thy blessing especially to rest upon all those that have gathered this morning, desiring to make their petitions known unto thee. May their hearts be vocal unto thee. Wilt thou listen to every one, and accept the confession, or thanksgiving, or aspiration of every one.

Grant that thy blessing may be meted out to every household, as their circumstances may require. Be with those who are rescued from sickness, and who have come hither to-day rejoicing once more in the privileges of the sanctuary. Be near to those who have occasion for thanksgiving in that their prayers are answered because their dearly beloved have been spared to them. Remember those, we beseech of thee, who desire to be here to-day, but who are kept away by sickness in their households. Wilt thou command that the angel of health may spread his wings over those households and heal them. Visit those households where there is sorrow and great distress, to-day. And be near to any that are going down the valley, and are not far from the gate. And though it seem to them dark, may they feel that beyond all there is light; that there is a land without a sun and without night.

And we pray that thou wilt grant that all those upon whom thou art laying burdens may have strength to-day; that they may have access to thee. Wilt thou be pleased to put thine arm beneath them, and lift them up.

Be near to any who are in perplexity, and who know not what way to go, and are lost as they that are in the wilderness. Be their guide out of all their perplexity. And may they stand in the strength of the Lord. And when they shall again have established their goings, may they stand with gratitude and with life-long service in thy sanctuary.

We pray that thy blessing may rest upon all parents, and on all those who are in trouble for their children. And hear, O Lord, the prayers of children who desire the blessing of Almighty God to rest upon their parents. Be with those who are separated from friends; who are upon the sea; who are doing business upon the great waters. Be with those who are far away in distant lands. Lord, how near they are to thee, though they are so far in seeming from us! Grant that our thoughts, as they go out to-day, may bear with them thy blessing every whither. We pray for those who are not favored as we are with the light of the Gospel; for those who sit in strange places to-day, and are heartsick in remembering past privileges that have long since ceased to them.

Be with those who have gone forth to preach the Gospel of Christ among the humble and the poor. Be with those whom no man cares for. Be with those who are suffering the privations of a life upon our frontier. May all those who seek to benefit others, find themselves strengthened of God. O! that the Gospel which is preached to-day might be one of wisdom and power from on high. And everywhere may thy people be comforted and strengthened. And grant that thy kingdom may come everywhere throughout the world.

We pray for the advance of civilization; for the purification of morals; for the melioration of manners; for concord among the people. We pray that the oppression of the weak may cease, and that the hearts of the strong may grow more Christ-like. We pray for the diffusion of that knowledge which shall drive superstition out of every religion. And we pray for those among whom there is no religion. We pray for the elevation of thy Churches. And grant, O Lord! that at last, the time may come when all the fierceness of the beast shall depart from out of man, and wars shall cease, and cruelties shall cease, and all the world shall be governed by justice, by love, by truth, and by fidelity.

And to the Father, the Son and the Spirit shall be praises for evermore.  
*Amen.*

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#### PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon the words of exhortation. May all of us be aroused to think more nearly as thou thinkest, and to feel more nearly as thou dost feel. Bring us up out of the dark, out of the blearing light of this world—its bad examples, its selfishness, and its ambitions. Inspire us with something of thine own life. Teach us to be humble as thou wert, and meek as thou wert. May we learn of thee. And in thy meekness and humility may we have something of thy rest, and of thy peace. O! that we might look forward more to the coming day, and live as seeing that which is invisible. Bless all that labor, and all that suffer, in their various circumstances. Purify their motives. Inspire their hearts. Lift us all higher toward the heavenly land. And bring us, at the last, to behold it with unveiled face, and to see thee as thou art. And to the Father, the Son and the Spirit shall be the praise, forevermore.  
*Amen.*

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